

Internet Safety Strategies for Youth



✓ Understand Online Behavior

Be aware that many Internet and cell phone service providers have rules about behavior. If you break them, your account—and every account in your home—could be canceled. If you break the law, you may also be reported to the police.

While online...

✓ Be Respectful of Others

Consider whether your actions contribute to creating a positive online community. Don't write mean things to others, belittle people or spread rumors/gossip and never say things that might make others feel unsafe or uncomfortable, even if you mean it as a "joke." Never share private information, messages, photos or videos about others because this is a breach of trust.

✓ Maintain Privacy

Don't share personal or private information online—like your full name, school name, home address, phone number and personal photos—with strangers or people you don't trust.

✓ Safeguard Security Information

Keep passwords and PINs to yourself—don't even tell your best friend—but never hide this information from your parents/guardians. They'll trust you more if you're open with them, and if a serious problem occurs, they made need this information to help you.

✓ Keep Electronics In View at All Times

Don't leave cell phones or other electronics out of sight. There are numerous applications and techniques someone can use to hack into or steal your devices.

✓ Don't Confide in Strangers

Communicating online is easier for people to lie about their identity. Someone you meet online may not be the best person to talk to if you are having problems.

✓ Never Meet a Stranger without Parental Approval

Don't arrange to meet people you met online without a parent's/guardian's permission.

Before going online...

✓ Set Rules

Make some rules with your parents/guardians before you go online, like the time of day and length of time you can be online, and sites you are allowed to visit. Don't bend the rules or visit other Web sites without their permission.

✓ Limit Electronic Use

Try to limit your cell phone and Internet use to a reasonable amount of time, and make sure you are keeping a healthy balance between online and in-person activities.

✓ Be an Upstanding e-Citizen

Keep in mind that no electronic message is completely private, including texts and e-mail. Your school and adult family members may be watching your online activity, and the police can recover all messages—even if you deleted them. If you are using the Internet to embarrass, threaten, harass or hurt others, chances are you will be caught.

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Be Cautious of Messages from Strangers

Don't open messages or attachments from people you don't know. In many instances it may be best to just delete them.

Be an Ally

Support people who are targets of mean behavior and bullying by reaching out to the target and telling the aggressor to stop. Report what is happening. Many online companies have anonymous reporting procedures or you can tell a trusted adult in your life.

Be a Positive Role Model

Model positive online behavior by writing kind posts and messages and applauding positive content that affirms people and communicates respect.

If you experience online bullying...

Don't Respond

Don't respond to bullying or inappropriate messages, but save them as evidence.

Communicate Problems with Trusted Adult

Talk about problems you experience online with an adult that you trust, like a family member, teacher or school counselor.

Report Behavior/Incidents

Always report online bullying, hate messages, inappropriate sexual activity and physical threats (including possible suicide attempts) to an adult family member, school authorities or the police.

Stop and Reject Communication

Block the cell phone numbers and electronic communication (e.g., social media, texts) of people who are sending unwanted messages; change your phone numbers, e-mail addresses, screen names and other online information if necessary.

File Complaints for Continuing Problems

For serious or continuing problems, file complaints with e-mail services, Internet Service Providers, Web sites, cell phone companies, etc. They can find the offenders, cancel their service and report them to the police if necessary.

Ask for Assistance in Reporting

If you don't feel comfortable reporting problems yourself, ask a friend or adult to do it for you. Keeping the people close to you aware of what's going on will make you feel safe and supported.

Log Off!

When in doubt about what to do, log off the electronic device and ask for help from a trusted adult.